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Annual Report

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER

OF HEALTH

FOR THE

Urban District of Northam

IN DEVON

For the year 1937.

J. EDMUND FRANCIS, M.O.H.

BIDEFORD
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ANNUAL REPORT 1937

1—Statistics and Social Conditions of the Area

AREA—4391 Acres.

POPULATION—Estimated resident 1937: 5270.

Number of inhabited houses at end of 1937 according to rate books: 1684.

Rateable value: £31,436.

Sum represented by a penny rate: £122.

Social and Physical Conditions.

The District is divided into four wards for the purpose of election to the Urban Council. Northam Ward has 430 houses, Appledore Ward 677, Westward Ho! 369, and Orchard Hill 208 rateable dwellings.

Appledore has shipbuilding and repairing yards which employ a large number of hands, and is a favourite sea fishing centre. Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill wards are chiefly residential, Westward Ho! being a popular seaside resort.

The well-known championship links of the Royal North Devon Golf Club are situated on Northam Burrows, and attract a large number of visitors during the year.

2—Vital Statistics for 1937

Births and Birth Rate.

The total of live births in the District was 53, of which 25 were boys and 28 girls. One boy was born illegitimate.

There were 3 still births registered, 2 boys and one girl, the last being illegitimate.

The live birth per 1000 of the population was 10·05, that for England and Wales being 14·9.

Deaths and Death Rate.

The total deaths were 74 (27 males and 47 females), but 22 of these (5 males and 17 females) were 70 years of age or over. The death rate per 1000 of the population was 10·4, that for England and Wales being 12·4. There were 3 deaths of infants under 1 year of age; all were legitimate.

There were 13 deaths from cancer, but none from measles, whooping-cough, or from diarrhoea in children under 2 years of age.

*The following table gives the causes of death
in the District during 1937 :*

CAUSES	MALES	FEMALES
Cancer	4	9
Tuberculosis (respiratory) ...		4
Pneumonia (all forms)	4	2
Other Respiratory diseases ...	1	1
Heart Disease	8	11
Other Circulatory Diseases ...	2	7
Cerebral Hæmorrhage		5
Influenza	1	1
Diabetes		1
Acute and Chronic Nephritis ...	2	
Chronic Nervous Disease ...	1	
Congenital Debility & Premature Birth		2
Death by Violence (not suicide) ...		1
Other Defined Diseases	4	3
Total ...	27	47

3—General Provision of Health Services in the Area

(1) *Public Health Officers of the Authority.*

There are two Public Health Officers for the Council—the Medical Officer of Health and the Sanitary Inspector. The duties of Water Inspector are now in the hands of the Council's Surveyor.

(2) *Nursing Arrangements in Area.*

There are two Voluntary Nursing Associations in the District, one for Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill; the other for Appledore. Both Associations employ fully qualified nurses, who also act as midwives.

(3) *Hospitals.*

The District is provided for by the Bideford and District Hospital, which is supported partly by voluntary contributions and partly by patients' fees. The Hospital is available for Medical and Surgical cases and contains about 40 beds.

The Isolation Hospital, situated at East-the-Water, Bideford, provides for infectious cases from the whole of North Devon, and was completed in 1935. It is now in full working order and up-to-date.

(4) *Ambulances.*

There are now in Bideford an up-to-date Motor Ambulance for Bideford and District for non-infectious cases, and an Ambulance in connection with, and kept at, the Isolation Hospital.

(5) *Clinics and Treatment Centres.*

A treatment centre for Venereal Diseases and a Tuberculosis Dispensary are available at Barnstaple for Northam District. Tubercular patients are admitted at Hawley and Hawkmoor Sanatoria.

There is a Maternity and Child Welfare Centre carried on at Appledore under the County Medical Officer of Health.

4—Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

Northam Water Supply.

The Water Supply is derived from a reservoir draining a large tract of moorland at Melbury, situated in Parkham parish, and about nine miles from Northam. The reservoir holds about thirty million gallons and is generally overflowing during the winter months. * Owing to the numerous visitors to the District in the summer and to a large increase in the number of houses built, it will be necessary to increase the storage capacity at Melbury, and conserve a larger supply for the District. The Council have already decided to carry this out in order to prevent a shortage during a dry year.

Analysis of the Water Supply.

A periodic analysis, both chemical and bacteriological, of the water is taken as a routine. The 1937 report from the analyst stated that the water is pure and fit for drinking and other domestic purposes.

Rainfall for 1937.

The Total Rainfall for 1937 was 55·61 inches, compared with 56·42 inches in 1936 and 38·39 inches in the very dry year 1921. The highest rainfall was 10·5 inches in February and the lowest 1·44 inches in August. These figures are taken at Melbury Water Works, and are considerably higher than those taken at the Royal North Devon Golf Club, where only 33·61 inches were registered during the year.

Rivers and Streams Pollution.

The only river affected by sewage is tidal. There is, however,

a small stream polluted by soapy water running through the south-west area of Northam District, which is now, since the alteration of boundaries, under the control of the Northam Council. Endeavours are still being made to remedy the nuisance by trenching, but sooner or later a £2000 piping scheme may have to be carried out if the present system is not satisfactory.

Drainage and Sewerage.

One new sewer was laid in Avon Lane, Westward Ho! connecting up new houses built in that road during the year. The unsatisfactory state of the Northam and Westward Ho! sewage is now on its way to be remedied by a scheme taking the sewage out to low water at Rock's Nose at the extreme western end of the district.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

(a) During the year the Sanitary Inspector made 230 inspections of a sanitary nature, apart from those relating to infectious diseases.

(b) There were 22 complaints of nuisances, which were all remedied after the serving of informal notices.

Schools.

There are five Elementary Schools in the District. All were inspected and found to be in a satisfactory condition.

5—Inspection and Supervision of Food.

(a) Milk Supply.

There are 3 wholesale and 26 retail dairymen registered in the District. Fifty-six inspections of Dairies and Cowsheds were made during the year. Samples of milk are constantly being taken for analysis and report.

(b) Bakehouses.

There are 6 Bakehouses in the District. Twenty-four inspections were made without any complaints as to conditions.

(c) Slaughterhouses.

There are 6 registered in the District. During the year 8 carcasses of animals and 210-lbs of meat were pronounced unfit for human consumption and voluntarily surrendered for destruction.

6—Housing

(I) Inspection of Dwelling Houses during the Year :

1—(a) Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for	} 300
housing defects (under Public Health or	
Housing Acts)	
(b) Number of Inspections made for the purpose	

2—(a) Number of dwelling-houses (included under sub-head (1) above) which were inspected and recorded under the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925.	}	45
(b) Number of inspections made for the purpose ...		
3—Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	}	25
4—Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation		
(2) <i>Remedy of Defects during the year without Service of formal Notices :</i>		
Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their officers	}	22
(3) <i>Action under Statutory Powers during the Year :</i>		
(a)—Proceedings under sections 17, 18 and 23 of the Housing Act 1930 :	}	IN
1—Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs ...		
2—Number of dwelling-houses which were rendered fit after service of formal notices :		
(a) By owners		
(b) By local authority in default of owners ...		
(b)—Proceedings under the Public Health Acts :		
1—Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied		
2—Number of dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices :		
(a) By owners		
(b) By local authority in default of owners ...		
(c)—Proceedings under sections 19 and 20 of the Housing Act, 1930 :		
1—Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made		
2—Number of dwelling-houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders		
(d)—Proceedings under section 20 of the Housing Act, 1930 :		
1—Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were made		
2—Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the tenement or room having been rendered fit		

(4) *Number of new houses built during the year :*

(a) By Sanitary Authority	...	...	Nil
(b) By Private effort	...	...	31

7—Prevention of and control over Infectious Diseases

During the year, 18 cases of Scarlet Fever, 6 of Pneumonia and 3 of Erysipelas were notified.

There was an epidemic of Scarlet Fever in neighbouring Districts, which started in the Autumn and continued well into the New Year. The disease was of a mild type and no deaths from this cause were recorded in the Northam District.

The cleansing and disinfection of infected rooms is carried out personally by the Sanitary Inspector, and in cases where the bedding of necessitous cases has to be destroyed, the Council gives reasonable compensation.

Diphtheria Antitoxin is supplied free by the Council in necessitous cases.

Tuberculosis

New Cases and Mortality during 1937.

Age	NEW CASES				DEATHS			
	Respiratory		Non-respiratory		Respiratory		Non-respiratory	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
26						I		
27						I		
30	I							
34		I						
35		I						
38		I				I		
53				I				
56	I					I		
Total	2	3		I		4		

Two of the newly notified cases were visitors to the District. No action was taken during the year under the Public Health (Prevention of Tuberculosis) Regulations 1925, or under section 62 of the Public Health Act 1925, or under section 172 of the Public Health Act 1936.